

Message Text

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65

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03

INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02

CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 AGR-05 PA-01 PRS-01

NSC-05 SS-15 STR-04 CEA-01 /085 W

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R 181707Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4543

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EGEN, AR

SUBJECT: BUSINESS STRIKE SUCCESSFUL

REF: BUENOS AIRES 0707

1. FEBRUARY 16 BUSINESS ACTIVITY HALTED THROUGHOUT ARGENTINA IN ONE DAY BUSINESS PROTEST STRIKE. STRIKE CALLED AND ORGANIZED BY RECENTLY FORMED PERMANENT ASSEMBLY OF SYNDICATED BUSINESS ENTITIES, APEGE (SEE REFTEL). ITS OBJECTIVE WAS PROTEST AGAINST GOA ECONOMIC POLICY AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS WHICH STRANGLING BUSINESS ACTIVITY.

2. DESPITE STRONG OPPOSITION BY GOVERNMENT AND CGT LABOR UNIONS, STRIKE REPORTEDLY WAS OVERWHELMING SUCCESS. NEWS-PAPER ACCOUNTS SAY 90-95 PERCENT OF ALL BUSINESS ACTIVITY IN COUNTRY HALTED IN KEY SECTORS SUCH AS AGRICULTURE, COMMERCE, INDUSTRY, CONSTRUCTION, ETC. IN BUENOS AIRES NEARLY ALL COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS CLOSED TO SUPPORT STRIKE, LEAVING ONLY ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES STILL OPERATING.

3. STRIKE OCCURRED IN GENERALLY CALM ATMOSPHERE ALTHOUGH THERE WERE SPORADIC BOMBING INCIDENTS. NO MAJOR LABOR- LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BUSINESS CONFRONTATION DEVELOPED. YESTERDAY (FEB. 17)

BUSINESS ACTIVITY IN COUNTRY BACK TO NORMAL.

4. COMMENT: REPORTEDLY THIS WAS FIRST BUSINESS PROTEST STRIKE IN ARGENTINA'S HISTORY. FACT THAT BUSINESS HAS NOW UNITED IN OPEN PROTEST AGAINST GOVERNMENT POLICY IS SIGNIFICANT NEW DEVELOPMENT. CGE, AND WITH IT POLICY OF CONCERTATION, CLEARLY HAS BEEN BRUSHED TO SIDE. SUCCESS OF THIS FIRST INITIATIVE HAS RAISED BUSINESS MORALE. BIG QUESTION IS WHAT WILL AFFECT AND BUSINESS SECTOR DO NEXT AS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS NOT LIKELY TO QUICKLY DISAPPEAR.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS, POLITICAL STRIKES, ECONOMIC PROGRAMS, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 FEB 1976
Decapton Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BUENOS01104
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760061-0747
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760241/aaaabjjs.tel
Line Count: 73
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 BUENOS AIRES 707
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUL 2004 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <07 JUL 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BUSINESS STRIKE SUCCESSFUL
TAGS: EGEN, EIND, AR, APEGE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006